

NASA aide helps fire up debate on global warming

Chicago Sun-Times Wire
WASHINGTON—James E. Hansen, the NASA official whose Senate testimony this week on the greenhouse effect was altered by the Bush administration, has been among the most outspoken U.S. scientists on the potentially dire effects of global warming.

Last year, he made headlines by linking the summer's lengthy drought to the greenhouse effect. Since then, his prominence has made him a target in the debate over what action the United States and other nations should take to slow worldwide warming.

"Last summer's testimony made him a lightning rod," said John Topping, president of the Climate Institute, who places Hansen in the mainstream of atmospheric scientists in their analyses of the likelihood and the likely impact of global warming.

"I think he stands where the majority of scientists are, but he's been willing to be more outspoken on what a lot of them think," Topping said.

Hansen is director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, which operates one of four major computer climate models in the United States. He testified last June before the Senate Energy Committee that he was "99 percent certain" that the warmer than normal temperatures during the 1980s have been due to the greenhouse effect and not to natural variation in climate. Although he did not say the greenhouse effect was the direct cause of last year's drought, he said such events would be more common if

the climate heats up.

The greenhouse effect is the trapping of heat by Earth's atmosphere. Scientists do not argue whether it exists; Earth would be much colder if the atmosphere did not trap heat. What scientists are debating are the effects of an increase in the atmosphere's heat-trapping capacity due to the buildup of carbon dioxide and methane from use of fossil fuels and deforestation.

This week, Hansen complained that the Bush administration forced him to alter his prepared testimony before the Senate's Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space, softening his view that man-made changes in the atmosphere are heating the climate and creating droughts.

"It distresses me that they put words in my mouth," he said. "They even put it in the first person."

The White House Office of Management and Budget, which changed Hansen's words, has been screening the testimony of government officials for more than a decade to ensure that it is in line with administration policy.

This week's incident was not Hansen's first run-in with OMB. In the summer of 1987, OMB revised prepared testimony by Hansen in which he had recommended increased funding for the study of global warming. In November of that year, OMB again changed his testimony to a Senate committee. A former NASA employee quoted by the newspaper in These Times said, "They wanted to soften the implications of his data. Where he would say something 'clearly' indicated that the greenhouse effect was in evidence—with all that implies—OMB would alter it to read 'probably.' They were clearly trying to make the language less absolute."

Chicago-based in These Times



James E. Hansen

reported in January that after Hansen's testimony last summer linked the drought to the greenhouse effect, the Reagan administration sought to silence him by finding a higher-level spokesman within the NASA bureaucracy to represent its views. When members of Congress protested, in These Times said, Hansen was allowed to testify, though "he had to add something saying that this didn't represent NASA's opinion."

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NOTICE

PUBLIC HEARING SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET 1989-90 BOARD OF EDUCATION CITY OF CHICAGO TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Public notice is hereby given by the Board of Education of the City of Chicago that in compliance with the statute in such case made and provided, it has prepared, in tentative form, its Supplemental School Budget for the 1989-90 Fiscal Year, and that (5) copies thereof, available to public inspection, have been filed and are now on file in the Office of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, 1819 West Pershing Road, Chicago, Illinois and that said Board of Education of the City of Chicago will hold Public Hearings upon said Supplemental Budget in tentative form on the 17th day of May, 1989 at the hour of 10:00 a.m. on said date and on the 18th day of May, 1989 at the hour of 10:00 a.m. on said date, at the Board Room of said Board of Education of the City of Chicago, located at 1819 West Pershing Road, in the City of Chicago, Illinois.

Dated at Chicago, Illinois, May 11, 1989

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF
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By: DR. FRANK W. GARDNER
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ATTEST:
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